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11 Ways to Build Your Personal Brand

by Gill Corkindale | 8:54 AM March 5, 2008

This is the second installment of a two-party entry on personal branding. Read the first part, [The Return of the Personal Brand \(http://blogs.harvardbusiness.org/corkindale/2008/02/time_for_a_brand_new_you_1.html\)](http://blogs.harvardbusiness.org/corkindale/2008/02/time_for_a_brand_new_you_1.html).

If, as I argued last time, personal branding is now a prerequisite for career success, what does your brand need to offer? I was happy to read your responses (http://blogs.harvardbusiness.org/corkindale/2008/02/time_for_a_brand_new_you_1.html#comments). Now I'll weigh in.

Your personal brand needs to be:

- Compelling to your audience
- Authentic
- Consistent
- Well-known

So what do you need to do to make it happen? Here are some ideas, based on my own thoughts, together with Tom Peters (<http://www.tompeters.com/>)' work and those who have developed his ideas over the last decade:

- **Rethink the way you view your career.** Don't think of yourself as an employee but as an asset to that you own. Forget your job title. Ask yourself: What do I do that brings value? What I am most proud of?
- **Reassess your loyalties.** Put loyalty to yourself first. Then be loyal to your team, your project, your customers, and your company.
- **Be authentic.** Be honest about who you are — your attributes and qualities. If you know yourself, you can promote an honest brand.
- **Learn from the big brands.** Identify what makes you distinctive from the competition. What have you done recently to make yourself stand out? What would your colleagues or your customers say is your greatest strength?
- **Make yourself visible.** Build your profile internally and externally. Ways to do this include networking, signing up for high-profile projects, showcasing your skills in presentations or workshops, writing for internal or external publications, volunteering for committees or panel discussions at a conference.
- **Be consistent.** Ensure that your message is consistent. If it is erratic, it will undermine your efforts. Everything you do — and choose not to do — contributes to your personal brand, from the way you talk on the phone to the way you behave at meetings or write emails.
- **Balance substance with style.** Don't forget that the way you do things is often as important as what you do. Do you speak succinctly? Do you command attention? Do you look the part?
- **Build and manage your marketing network.** Your friends, colleagues, clients, and customers are an important marketing vehicle for your brand. What is said about you will determine the value of your brand.
- **Learn to influence.** Use your personal power, your role and your network. But use them sensitively and intelligently, or else you will not be regarded as a credible or trustworthy leader.
- **Seek feedback.** It's critical to keep checking the value of your brand. This can be done by formal methods such as 360 feedback or informally, by asking people around you for honest and constructive feedback on your performance. Another good way to check is to go for job interviews, regardless of whether you wish to change jobs, which will help you test your market value.
- **Reassess.** Keep checking what motivates you. What's your personal definition of success? Write yourself a personal statement about why you work and check it regularly.

What do you think? Is personal branding vital for success at work? Is the concept relevant only to Western executives or is it also important for managers in emerging markets? Are there any drawbacks to marketing yourself in this way? If so, what should you do about it?

Read all of Gill Corkindale's "Letter from London" posts (<http://blogs.harvardbusiness.org/corkindale>).

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(http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/b02/en/common/item_detail.jhtml?id=U0712A&referral=243e)

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